rewarding a winning combination.

2.   (Amended)   The method of claim 1 wherein game play is only commenced if it is determined that an appropriate amount of money has been inserted into the gaming apparatus.

3.   The method of claim 1 wherein said symbols are randomly selected by a microprocessor.

4.   (Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein symbols are designated for replacement and replaced on multiple occasions before it is determined whether a winning combination exists.

5.   The method of claim 1 wherein the option is provided of designating no symbols for replacement.

6. (Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein only one symbol is designated for replacement.

7.   (Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein multiple symbols are designated for replacement.

8.   The method of claim 1 wherein a list of winning combinations is stored in a memory and compared to the combination displayed on said monitor to determine if there is a winning combination.

9.   The method of claim 8 wherein winning combinations are determined by evaluating the symbols displayed across one or more rows.

10. The method of claim 8 wherein winning combinations are determined by evaluating the symbols displayed across one or more columns.

11. The method of claim 8 wherein said initial and replacement symbols are selected by generating random numbers and comparing those random numbers to numbered positions on a list of symbols.

12. The method of claim 1 wherein said initial and replacement symbols are selected by choosing symbols from a fixed position on a periodically shuffled list of symbols.

13. (Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein each said replacement symbol is selected from a group which includes the initial symbol it replaces.

15. (Twice Amended) The method of claim 13 wherein said replacement symbol is replaced at the player's option if it is the same as the initial symbol it replaces.

16. (Amended) The method of claim 13 wherein said replacement symbol will be automatically replaced if it is the same as the initial symbol it replaces.

17. The method of claim 6 wherein all symbols which are the same as the one symbol designated for replacement are also replaced.

18. (Four Times Amended) A method of operating an electronic gaming apparatus having a plurality of symbols and background colors arrayed in separate boxes of multiple columns and rows on its monitor comprising the steps of:

selecting initial symbols and initial background colors for said symbols to be so arrayed in said separate boxes of said multiple columns and rows;

allowing the player to designate a chosen number, from none to all, of said initial symbols and initial background colors for replacement;

selecting said chosen number of replacement symbols and background colors;

replacing said chosen number of initial symbols and initial background colors on said monitor with replacement symbols and replacement background colors; and,

determining whether said replacement symbols and replacement background colors, together with any remaining initial symbols and initial background colors arrayed in said separate boxes of said multiple columns and rows, constitute a winning combination; and,

rewarding a winning combination.

19.   The method of claim 18 wherein said replacement background colors are chosen independently of said replacement symbols.

20. (Thrice Amended) An electronic gaming apparatus comprising:

a monitor for displaying a plurality of symbols arrayed in separate boxes of multiple symbol columns and rows;

a memory which stores a list of possible symbols to be displayed on said monitor;

a microprocessor to select symbols from said memory for display on said monitor and to determine whether a final group of displayed symbols creates a winning or losing game;

a first switch to initiate game play by causing the microprocessor to select an initial set of symbols and display those initial symbols arrayed in separate boxes of multiple symbol columns and rows on said monitor; and,

a second switch to complete game play by allowing the player to choose for replacement from none to all of said initial symbols and have said microprocessor randomly select said replacement symbols from a list of possible symbols

in said memory and then display on said monitor said replacement symbols together with any remaining initial symbols to create said final group of displayed symbols arrayed in separate boxes of multiple symbol columns and rows.

21. (Amended) The electronic gaming apparatus of claim 20 wherein said player chooses initial symbols for replacement by designating which initial symbols to replace.

22. The electronic gaming apparatus of claim 20 wherein said player chooses initial symbols for replacement by designating which initial symbols should be kept and then allowing said electronic gaming apparatus to replace all non-designated symbols.

23. The electronic gaming apparatus of claim 20 wherein said player can designate one or more columns of initial symbols for replacement.

24. The electronic gaming apparatus of claim 23 wherein said columns of initial symbols have the appearance of reels on a mechanical reel type of slot machine.

25. The electronic gaming apparatus of claim 20 wherein said player can designate one or more rows of initial symbols for replacement.

26. The electronic gaming apparatus of claim 20 wherein nine symbols are arrayed in three rows and three columns.

27. The electronic gaming apparatus of claim 20 further including a touch screen which is electronically connected to said microprocessor.

28. The electronic gaming apparatus of claim 27 wherein said first and second switches appear on said touch screen and can be activated simply by touching the region of the touch screen in which they appear.

29.   The electronic gaming apparatus of claim 20 wherein only one symbol is chosen for replacement.

30.   The electronic gaming apparatus of claim 20 wherein multiple symbols are chosen for replacement.

31.   (Amended) A method of operating an electronic gaming apparatus having a plurality of symbols arrayed in multiple symbol columns and rows on its monitor comprising the steps of:

selecting initial symbols to be arrayed in said multiple symbol columns and rows;

displaying the initial symbols selected in an array of multiple symbol columns and rows on said monitor;

allowing the player to designate a chosen number, from one to all, of said initial displayed symbols for replacement;

selecting said chosen number of replacement symbols;

replacing said chosen number of initial symbols on said monitor with replacement symbols;

determining whether said replacement symbols and any remaining initial symbols arrayed in said multiple symbol columns and rows constitute a winning combination by assessing whether particular symbols are aligned horizontally, vertically, diagonally or in another geometric pattern which matches a predetermined winning combination; and,

rewarding a winning combination.

32. An electronic gaming apparatus comprising:

a monitor for displaying a plurality of symbols arrayed in multiple symbol columns and rows;

a memory which stores a list of possible symbols to be displayed on said monitor;

a microprocessor to select symbols from said memory for display on said monitor and to determine whether a final group of displayed symbols creates a winning or losing game by assessing whether particular symbols are aligned horizontally, vertically, diagonally or in another geometric pattern which matches a predetermined winning combination;

a first switch to initiate game play by causing the microprocessor to select an initial set of symbols and display those initial symbols arrayed in multiple symbol columns and rows on said monitor; and,

a second switch to complete game play by allowing the player to choose for replacement from none to all of said initial symbols and have said microprocessor randomly select said replacement symbols from a list of possible symbols in said memory and then display on said monitor said replacement symbols together with any remaining initial symbols to create said final group of displayed symbols arrayed in multiple symbol columns and rows.

33. A method of operating an electronic gaming apparatus having a plurality of symbols arrayed in multiple symbol columns and rows on its monitor comprising the steps of:

selecting initial symbols to be arrayed in said multiple symbol columns and rows;

displaying the initial symbols selected in an array of multiple symbol columns and rows on said monitor after a display of a simulated spinning motion;

designating a chosen number, from one to all, of said initial displayed symbols for replacement;

selecting said chosen number of replacement symbols;

replacing said chosen number of initial symbols on said monitor with replacement symbols after the display of a simulated spinning motion;

determining whether said replacement symbols and any remaining initial symbols arrayed in said multiple symbol columns and rows constitute a winning combination; and,

rewarding a winning combination.

34. An electronic gaming apparatus comprising:

a monitor for displaying a plurality of symbols arrayed in multiple symbol columns and rows;

a memory which stores a list of possible symbols to be displayed on said monitor;

a microprocessor to select symbols from said memory for display on said monitor and to determine whether a final group of displayed symbols creates a winning or losing game;

a first switch to initiate game play by causing the microprocessor to select an initial set of symbols and, after using a simulated spinning motion, display those initial symbols arrayed in multiple symbol columns and rows on said monitor; and,

a second switch to complete game play by allowing the player to choose for replacement from none to all of said initial symbols and have said microprocessor randomly select said replacement symbols from a list of possible symbols

in said memory and then display on said monitor, after using a simulated spinning motion, said replacement symbols together with any remaining initial symbols to create said final group of displayed symbols arrayed in multiple symbol columns and rows.

35. (Amended) A method of operating an electronic gaming apparatus having a plurality of symbols arrayed in multiple symbol columns and rows on its monitor so as to appear to be on a plurality of vertical reels comprising the steps of:

selecting initial symbols to be arrayed in said multiple symbol columns and rows;

displaying the initial symbols selected in an array of multiple symbol columns and rows on said monitor so as to appear to be on a plurality of vertical reels;

designating a chosen number, from one to all, of said initial displayed symbols for replacement;

selecting said chosen number of replacement symbols;

replacing said chosen number of initial symbols on said monitor with replacement symbols;

determining whether said replacement symbols and any remaining initial symbols arrayed in said multiple symbol columns and rows constitute a winning combination; and,

rewarding a winning combination.

36. An electronic gaming apparatus comprising:

a monitor for displaying a plurality of symbols arrayed in multiple symbol columns and rows so as to appear to be on a plurality of vertical reels;

a memory which stores a list of possible symbols to be displayed on said monitor;

a microprocessor to select symbols from said memory for display on said monitor and to determine whether a final group of displayed symbols creates a winning or losing game;

a first switch to initiate game play by causing the microprocessor to select an initial set of symbols and display those initial symbols arrayed in multiple symbol columns and rows on said monitor; and,

a second switch to complete game play by allowing the player to choose for replacement from none to all of said initial symbols and have said microprocessor randomly select said replacement symbols from a list of possible symbols in said memory and then display on said monitor said replacement symbols together with any remaining initial symbols to create said final group of displayed symbols arrayed in multiple symbol columns and rows.

REMARKS

Claims 1-36 remain in this case for consideration. Claims 1, 15, 16, 18, 31, 33 and 35 have been amended. A "Version With Markings To Show Changes Made To The Abstract And Claims" is presented on a separate sheet at the conclusion of this Amendment.

A.   Interview Summary

Applicant would first like to thank Examiner White for taking the time to talk over the telephone with Applicant's undersigned attorney on June 19, 2002 about how Applicant's invention differs from the cited art and how Applicant's claims could be better worded to define those differences. More specifically, Applicant's attorney and